

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: TECH, IN, US
SUBJECT: INDIAN NUCLEAR POLICY

1. BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED. THE JULY 11 "ECONOMIC TIMES" CARRIES AN EDITORIAL DESCRIBING AS "UNFORTUNATE" PRIME MINISTER DESAI'S "UNILATERAL" RENUNCIATION OF THE USE OF NUCLEAR EXPLOSIONS FOR PEACEFUL PURPOSES. THE EDITORIAL ALSO TERMED AS "UNCONVINCING" HIS STATEMENT ON THIS SUBJECT AT THE RECENT MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENTARY CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE OF THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SEE NEW DELHI 10277). "CONTRARY TO WHAT HE SAID THERE IS AMPLE SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE TO JUSTIFY" THE USE OF PNE'S. THE EDITORIAL CITES VARIOUS USES OF PNE TECHNOLOGY BY THE SOVIET UNION, THE U.S., FRANCE AND CHINA IN EXPLOITATION OF MINERAL AND GAS RESOURCES. THE EDITORIAL STATES THAT NUCLEAR EXPLOSIVE TECHNOLOGY COULD BE APPLIED IN INDIA IN SUCH AREAS AS EXPLOITATION OF OIL AND GAS DEPOSITS IN GUJARAT AND THE NORTHEAST REGION, EXPLOITATION OF COPPER AND LIGNITE RESERVES, OR EVEN FOR CHANGING THE COURSE OF THE

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BRAHMAPUTRA RIVER TO PREVENT PERENNIAL FLOODING. IT RECOGNIZES THE DIFFICULTIES INVOLVED IN APPLYING THIS TECHNOLOGY BUT ADDS THAT "OUR NUCLEAR OPTIONS MUST REMAIN OPEN WHETHER OR NOT WE GET ENRICHED URANIUM FROM THE U.S."

2. THE JULY 10 "HINDU" CARRIES A LONG AND DETAILED ARTICLE BY ITS SCIENCE CORRESPONDENT WHICH APPARENTLY IS BASED ON A

SERIES OF INTERVIEWS WITH UNIDENTIFIED SCIENTISTS AT THE BHABHA ATOMIC RESEARCH CENTER (BARC) AND WHICH DEALS WITH A VARIETY OF NUCLEAR ISSUES

(A) CITING BARC SCIENTISTS, THE ARTICLE STATES THAT THE QUESTION OF THE CONTINUED SUPPLY OF ENRICHED FUEL FOR TARAPUR HAS OBSCURED THE CENTRAL QUESTION OF REPROCESSING WHICH IS REQUIRED TO DEVELOPING AN ALTERNATE FUEL FOR TAPS. THE CORRESPONDENT CITES BARC SCIENTISTS AS SAYING THAT A DECISION MUST BE MADE NOW ON AN ALTERNATE FUEL SUPPLY SOURCE FOR TARAPUR, SINCE TWO YEARS WOULD BE REQUIRED TO IMPLEMENT SUCH A SCHEME. THE PLUTONIUM FOR SUCH ALTERNATE FUEL COULD BE PRODUCED AT THE TROMBAY REPROCESSING PLANT, BUT THE DECISION TO DO THIS "WILL HAVE TO BE A POLITICAL ONE." THE ARTICLE NOTES THAT ACCORDING TO THE ORIGINAL INDO-US CONTRACT, A BINATIONAL TEAM IS SUPPOSED TO ASSESS THE SAFEGUARDS AT TROMBAY BEFORE IT CAN BE USED FOR REPROCESSING SPENT FUEL. THE U.S., HOWEVER, ACCORDING TO THE ARTICLE, HAS "STALLED ON VARIOUS PRETEXTS, RESULTING IN PILING UP OF UNREPROCESSED WASTES." REFERRING TO THE "GLOOMY" 1977-78 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ATOMIC ENERGY, THE ARTICLE NOTES THAT THE OUTPUT OF THE TWO TARAPUR UNITS WAS CUT BACK IN 1977 TO 65 PERCENT TO STRETCH OUT THE FUEL SUPPLY STORAGE SPACE. IT NOTES THAT INDIAN EFFORTS ARE UNDER WAY TO "FABRICATE INDIGENOUS STORAGE FACILITIES" AND THE U.S. HAS OFFERED CONSULTANCY FOR THIS PROJECT ON A NO-COST BASIS. "SEVERAL SCIENTISTS FEEL THAT THIS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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LAST OFFER IS A U.S. PLOY TO DELAY ANY INDIAN DECISION ON REPROCESSING."

(B) THE ARTICLE CITES BARC SCIENTISTS AS SAYING THAT THE DELAYS IN SUPPLYING ENRICHED FUEL FOR TARAPUR IS "A CLEAR BREACH OF CONTRACT AND INDIA WOULD THEREFORE BE FULLY JUSTIFIED IN TAKING A UNILATERAL DECISION TO REPROCESS THE SPENT FUEL...THEY FEEL THAT THE U.S. STRATEGY IS TO LET US HAVE IRREGULAR DRIBBLETS OF URANIUM AND DEFLECT ANY ATTEMPTS TOWARD REPROCESSING...SOME SCIENTISTS SAY THAT IT APPEARS THAT THE (INDIAN) POWERS THAT BE ARE PREPARED TO ABJURE THE RIGHT TO REPROCESS FOR A FEW TONNES OF ENRICHED URANIUM. THE LATEST RELEASE OF 7.6 TONNES, THEY SAY, IS A MEASURE AIMED AT DELAYING OUR INEVITABLE DECISION TO REPROCESS."

(C) THE ARTICLE NOTES THAT INDIAN SCIENTISTS QUESTION THE WISDOM OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S UNILATERAL GIVING UP OF THE RECOURSE TO PNE'S WITHOUT CONSULTING THE SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY. THESE SCIENTISTS REPORTEDLY BELIEVE THAT THE PM IS OPPOSED TO PNE'S BECAUSE OF HIS AVERSION TO THE POKHARAN TEST, DESPITE THE FACT THAT "THEY FEEL THAT POKHARAN WAS AN UNQUALIFIED SUCCESS." THE ARTICLE GOES ON TO CITE POTENTIAL APPLICATIONS

OF PNE'S IN INDIA AND NOTES THAT EVEN NOW THE U.S. AND THE SOVIET UNION CONTINUE PERIODIC UNDERGROUND TESTS. "HOW THEN CAN WE WRITE OFF PNE'S IN THEIR ENTIRETY? THIS IS THE QUESTION BOTHERING SCIENTISTS...THEY FEEL THAT THE UNCEASING U.S. PROPAGANDA AGAINST PNE HAS INFLUENCED THE PRIME MINISTER. THE LEAST HE COULD HAVE DONE, THEY SAY, WAS TO CONSULT OUR OWN SCIENTISTS."

(D) THE ARTICLE NOTES THAT "SCIENTISTS AT BARC ARE ALSO VERY CRITICAL OF THE PURSUIT CLAUSE ATTACHED TO THE SUPPLY OF HEAVY WATER BY THE USSR," WHICH ENABLES THE SOVIETS TO "CHECK ALL FACILITIES WHERE RUSSIAN HEAVY WATER OR PRODUCTS FROM PLANTS WHICH HAVE USED THIS HEAVY WATER ARE USED." THE CORRESPONDENT WRITES THAT THESE SCIENTISTS "SEE NO DIFFERENCE BETWEEN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THE U.S. AND THE U.S.S.R. IN THE MATTER OF WANTING TO IMPOSE DISCRIMINATORY SAFEGUARDS." THEY HOPE THAT THE COMMISSIONING OF INDIAN-BUILT HEAVY WATER PLANTS WILL ELIMINATE DEPENDENCE ON THE SOVIETS. END UNCLASSIFIED.

3. BEING LIMITED OFFICIAL USE. A SENIOR G.E. OFFICIAL TOLD CONGEN BOMBAY THAT IT WAS MOST UNLIKELY THE INDIANS COULD RECYCLE TARAPUR SPENT FUEL. THIS OFFICIAL SAID THAT PLUTONIUM RECEIVED FROM TARAPUR SPENT FUEL WOULD BE IRRADIATED AN AVERAGE OF 20,000 MW DAYS. HE KNEW OF NO PLACE IN THE WORLD WHERE SUCH HIGHLY IRRADIATED FUEL WAS SUCCESSFULLY RECYCLED. HE NOTED THAT EVEN THE CANDU FUEL WHICH IS IRRADIATED TO ONLY 7,000 MW DAYS WOULD CAUSE PROBLEMS BECAUSE OF ITS DEGREE OF IRRADIATION. A COMPLICATING FACTOR IS THE LONG RODS (12 FT) USED IN TARAPUR. PUTTING PLUTONIUM INTO THESE RODS WOULD REQUIRE SEGMENTATION WHICH WOULD COMPLICATE THE BUNDLE DESIGN. THE GE OFFICIAL THOUGHT THE ODDS WERE AT LEAST 100-1 AGAINST THE INDIANS' RECYCLING PLUTONIUM AT TARAPUR IN THE NEXT DECADE. END LIMITED OFFICIAL USE.
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